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**This letter contains a legal notice so please read the entire note carefully:**

This letter is a request to the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures to remove its tribute to our sister, Sacheen Littlefeather, for the following reasons:

With reference to Helene Hagan's letter written December 19, 2022 and received by the Academy entitled "Sacheen Littlefeather: Fable and Truth", let me introduce ourselves. My name is Trudy Orlandi and my younger sister is Rosalind Cruz. We are the biological, blood sisters, and only surviving heirs of Marie Louise Cruz AKA Sacheen Littlefeather, the latter being her stage name. Sacheen was the eldest of the three daughters, born in 1946. All three of us have the same mother and father, namely Geroldine Barnitz Cruz and Manuel Ybarra Cruz, and the same maternal and paternal grandparents on both sides of our family. None of the three of us daughters had any children. **Therefore, Marie Louise Cruz AKA Sacheen Littlefeather, has no nieces or nephews.** There are also no surviving aunts or uncles on either side of our family. There are just the two surviving sisters as noted. As a follow-up to Helene Hagan's letter submitted and received by the Academy, as stated, we are herein sharing factual information regarding our family. It is not fiction and it does not rely on faulty memories to bring forward the truth. As her sisters, it has been, and is, disturbing to know that a standing exhibit within your museum is still there.

In our opinion, Jacqueline Stewart's statement that self-identification is acceptable to keep the credibility of the museum is unacceptable to us. It furthermore endorses the slander and vicious lies our sister, Marie Louise, told for personal gain and in creating her alter-ego character, Sacheen Littlefeather. This exhibit is not only an extension of the fantasy life and slanderous lies about our family, especially our father, but continues to inflict needless emotional pain and suffering on us. Furthermore, your museum is now the controversy of credibility and endorsement of Pretendians and untruths of our family. This fantasy exhibit needs to be removed instead of the Academy trying to save face. It is also our understanding that Bird Runningwater and Jacqueline Stewart orchestrated and coordinated not only the exhibit but the "glorious" evening of and apology to Sacheen who is a Pretendian, no less, but also our sister Sacheen Littlefeather. Outside of her false interviews, we are writing to not only give you a clear picture and background of a wonderful family and childhood but also, to squash the myth. The Academy is defending this myth which shores up the lies and misstatements of Sacheen towards the general public and of our family. The 1973 Oscar refusal was an opportunity for our sister to further her

career. It was Brando's way of protesting the portrayal of Native Americans in film. Now that we are at the 50 year mark of that event, the Academy is now endorsing the stereo type of Native Americans with a fictitious exhibit of Sacheen causing further damage to the good name of our family and now, to us, as her sisters and the last surviving heirs. The San Francisco Chronicle, in one of their articles written by Jacqueline Keeler, brought the truth forward. One day a saint, the next day a fraud. Sacheen's legacy is now a Pretendian in history. I would hope the Academy of Performing Arts, and keeping in mind the good intentions of history, has not lowered itself to be the "Academy of Performing Frauds". With that said, we would like to share our upbringing and truth with the members of the Academy; especially, Jacqueline Stewart and Bird Runningwater.

### **FACT (not fiction)**

Sacheen and I were close as children as I was 3 + years younger than she was, being born in 1950. Rosalind was 7 years my junior, born in 1957, and 11 years younger than Sacheen, born in 1946. Our mother and father were hard working parents who owned their own saddle shop business and were known in Salinas for their excellent craftsmanship in saddle making. My dad enjoyed horses and owned his own horse, Zurc. We kept Zurc in a corral on our property in Santa Rita, the district of which was later incorporated into the town of Salinas. We were considered, by all standards, a middle class family. My father, Manuel, was born in Oxnard, California on March 6 1922. My mother, Geroldine, was born in Santa Barbara, California on March 18. 1923. My father was Mexican American while my mother had a European background (German, French and Holland Dutch).

We knew our maternal grandparents, Gerold and Marie Barnitz, very well. They lived next door to my parents in Santa Rita and we grew up in a household full of activities such as ballet, 4-H, music lessons, community theater, skating, synchronized swimming lessons and productions, horseback riding, sewing, canning, Brownie/Girl Scouts, etc. We also had the luxury of a Catholic education, European vacations, weekend jaunts to San Francisco and other locations, summer camp and many other activities too numerous to mention. In all, it was a very well rounded and fun filled childhood.

The only paternal grandparent I knew was my father's father, George Cruz. I met him twice in the very early stages of my life. He was an alcoholic and was very abusive to my father, Manuel, when my father was a young child. George's alcoholism and angry temperament landed him in jail more than once and caused my father to be displaced from his home at a young age. My father's mother died when she was somewhere in her mid 20's. Growing up with my father was unique because he was deaf, losing his hearing in his early years at age 9 (nine) due to meningitis. So, we had to communicate either through writing (very laborious) or my father's ability to read lips. My mother could communicate with him via sign language. We could not. It must have been very difficult for my father to be deaf. But, he seemed to handle it well. I am not sure I would have been so accepting of such a disability. He worked hard all his life but was also very sick. When I was very young, he was misdiagnosed with bronchitis. The doctors told him he needed to be in a warmer climate to cure the bronchitis. So, he and my mother, along with my little sister Rosalind, moved to Arizona for a year hoping the climate change would help. It didn't. Sacheen and I decided to stay behind in Salinas with my maternal grandparents to be near our schools, activities and friends rather than be uprooted.

After one year, my parents and Rosalind returned to Salinas. The dry heat did nothing to heal my father because he had cancer and, as noted, was misdiagnosed as having bronchitis. He had surgery to remove part of one lung. Later, as the cancer spread, he had another section of his other lung removed, then a kidney and ribs to stop the growth. The cancer continued to spread to his bones and then his brain before he finally succumbed to his illness at age 44 in 1966. Both Rosalind and I, along with my

mother, were with my father when he passed in the hospital. Sacheen was not there. It was a difficult time. My father grew up in a very abusive and dysfunctional family environment. But, he rose above those hardships. He did not follow in his own father's abusive footsteps and did not drink, smoke nor have pedophile tendencies and was not mentally ill. Neither was my mother mentally ill.

I have fond memories of the childhood Sacheen and I had and all the advantages that were afforded to us including, as mentioned, a Catholic education which was not inexpensive. As youngsters, Sacheen and I played together and had many neighborhood friends. We did not live in an impoverished neighborhood or one that was designated anything but a mixed neighborhood although it was mostly white. I mention this because after Sacheen died, I learned that she said we lived in a poor Indian neighborhood in a shack with no toilet, etc. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our parents were a mixed race family of Mexican and European backgrounds but never American Indian.

American Indian heritage was never a discussion in our house because we could not usurp or pretend an identity we never had. Plus, we inherently knew our background was Mexican and European. Nothing to be ashamed of from our perspectives. However, Sacheen was embarrassed to be part Mexican. She could just not accept my dad and who he was ethnically. She hated him for it and it was palpable. She showed her disdain in so many subtle ways. She just ignored him, wouldn't let her friends meet him and considered his illness as an inconvenience to her getting the insatiable attention she needed from both my father and my mother who doted over my father when he was ill. Sacheen said the most heinous lies about our father making false statements about him beating my mother and making her watch these beatings. Her fabrication and hurtful lies about our father was a strategic move to garner support and empathy for her agenda and to slander someone she hated.

As a child, I saw Sacheen have outbursts of anger and tantrums followed by bouts of destruction. I didn't realize at the time that these were early signs of her mental illness that exacerbated over time to the extent that she was committed to mental institutions throughout her life time. Her first foray into an institution was Agnews State Hospital, located in the San Jose area, where she spent a year. Back then, it was called the "Great Insane Asylum for the Insane", a facility established in 1885 to care for the mentally ill. Thereafter, it was one mental hospital after another throughout the years. Since her early childhood, she wanted to be someone other than herself and famous. So, she took on different identities until, in her late teens, she decided being an American Indian princess had the right persona for her alter ego. From then on, she became Sacheen Littlefeather. She perfected her portrayal by becoming immersed into this character. I saw the change over time until she became absorbed into this persona even though we have no such identity in our family history. She could care less about the American Indian's plight but rather, was more concerned about the fame and glory she could derive from such a character. If you had the means and opportunity for her continual climb to garner fame, you were in her sphere of acquaintances. If you had outlived your usefulness, you were cut off. This is not mental illness but rather a cunning strategy of creating a web of lies to further her image; use anyone and everyone to get to the end goal. This strategy included egregious lies about our family and our lifestyle. Who could feel sorry for a middle class Mexican/European woman with privileges? Plus, she incorporated into her persona the false stereotypical culture of American Indians as being alcoholics, wife beaters, poverty stricken, etc. to bolster pity for her persona, create a victim mentality and support her incessant narcissism. This false narrative did nothing for the American Indians. Outside of creating accolades for herself, what did she really do for indigenous tribes?

It wasn't until after she died on October 2, 2022 that Rosalind and I learned the depth of her lies, especially about my father, my mother, our maternal grandparents, our lifestyle, etc. which was shocking to hear. She took ownership and credit for the work of others and claimed them as her own. She claimed credit for things she never did, such as her educational accomplishments and degrees, and lied consistently about her life and accomplishments. It was beyond shocking.

Now, Rosalind and I are being villainized by speaking the truth and it is causing us great emotional harm and duress. There has been a concerted effort by Sacheen and her enablers to make her someone she is not. She has told lie after lie, many times contradicting herself, without anyone checking her story. Sacheen never talked about her two blood sisters, me and Rosalind. Why? Because if it was known she had two siblings, we would have blown her cover a long time ago if her stories were checked through us by others. After she rejected the Oscar for Brando in March of 1973, Roger Ebert outed her as being a Mexican actress. So did Rona Barrett. Liv Ullmann, in a video I recently saw, told an interviewer that Sacheen told her she was Mexican. Who's listening? Apparently not many. It seemed more important to others to raise Sacheen up as this great Indian fighter and defender of their rights even though she did nothing for indigenous tribes. All she wanted was the accolades and praise that she yearned for all her life. **The eternal victim** role she played gave her unbridled attention and pity. A deep desire to be anyone but who she was and who was also willing to use anybody and their achievements to ascribe to herself to get that acknowledgment. She used people in the film industry who could further her identity and they used her to advance their careers in Hollywood as well. I care for my sister but not this pretend identity that did nothing of import for the Indian nations.

I was in Sacheen's Pacific Heights apartment in San Francisco when she got the call from Marlon Brando. He wanted her to replace him at the Oscars. It was fairly certain that he was going to win best actor category for 'The Godfather'. He wanted her to reject the Oscar. She wanted me to go with her but I declined. That's not my comfort zone. When she returned from Los Angeles, she shared with me her experience. Not once did she ever mention John Wayne attacking her or him needing to be held back or restrained. In fact, she never mentioned his name. For such a significant event, it would have been natural for her to mention that to me. But, years later, I read where he had to be held back from accosting her. Of course, I believe he had passed away by the time she began to tell this fairy tale about Mr. Wayne. So, any make believe story she told about him became fact when, in essence, it was fiction.

Sacheen was married only once in her life back on October 23, 1971. She and her husband, last name Rubio, separated on April 15, 1974 before her divorce was finalized on January 28, 1977. She never married again regardless of the rumors. She was never married to Charles Johnston, a convicted pedophile in the state of California who was also incarcerated for manslaughter.

As the years passed, Sacheen grew more and more into her mental illness diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenia. She disassociated from reality and dove deeper into her fantasy world with the help and support of people and groups such as yourself.

**We request that the Academy immediately cease and desist from lionizing or perpetuating the myth of Sacheen Littlefeather. Any tribute to her must be removed to protect our family and the public from the continued sham. If all of your tribute is not promptly removed from public display, it will leave us with no choice but to vindicate our rights through the legal system. Please understand that we are prepared to pursue all appropriate legal means to bring this travesty of our family to a stop.**

We trust that you will take our warning seriously. Otherwise, we will move forward to protect our name and that of our family.

Sincerely,

Trudy Orlandi  
*Trudy Orlandi*

Rosalind Cruz  
*Rosalind Cruz*

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